EXHIBITIONS AND OTHER MATTERS OF FINE ART

OLD MASTERS AND NEW DABSTERS

Spanish and French Portraits—Armory Show Aftermath.

By ROYAL CORTISSOZ.

A peculiar interest attaches to the announcement that the Riggs collection of European arms and armor will presently be made accessible to the public at the Metropolitan Museum, the usual opening reception being set for the evening of Monday, January 25. This body of antiquities is one of exceptional scale and brilliance, and the donor has invited the amalgamation with it all of the other pieces acquired by the same department from other sources. The ensemble, developed by Dr. Dean after the picturesque fashion long since magnificently established in the Armeria at Madrid, should yield a romantic spectacle, and it must possess a great educational significance. Connoisseurs of mediæval and Renaissance craftsmanship await this opening with

DON ISIDRO GONZALEZ.
(From the portrait by Goya at the Knoedler Gallery.)

intense interest. Especially welcome, too, in the series of exhibitions now become so characteristic of the museum, is the one illustrative of Flemish decorative art. Nothing could well be more timely.

This afternoon at 6 o'clock the winter exhibition of the Academy will be closed. It has enjoyed fair popularity and among the pictures sold there are to be reckoned several of the most important works contributed. One of these is Mr. Hawthorne's "Le Peignoir Rose." Another is Mr. Bellows's "Girl at Piano." Landscapes by Mr. Ochtman and Mr. Bruce Crane have also found purchasers. With the departure of the Academy the galleries are turned over to the Architectural League. That organization will open its show on Sunday, February 7, and will continue at the Fine Arts Building until the end of the month. The Macdowell Club has opened another group exhibition. This one contains paintings and sculptures by Lillian Baer, Varian E. Cockcroft, Alice Morgan Wright and others. At the Folsom gallery there will open on Tuesday an exhibition of new landscapes by William H. Singer. The Belnord gallery announces a show of dry points and pencil portrait sketches by A. G. Learned. Japanese color prints are at the Little Gallery. From the Daniel gallery comes the statement that the current exhibition will be extended to January 26. The show of paintings by John Lavery at the Kraushaar gallery will be opened to-morrow. The Hodgkin gallery exhibits Copley's historic canvas, "Monmouth Before King James II."

The auctions are proceeding in a highly encouraging manner, proving that even in war times there are plenty of buyers about. Mr. Clarke's Chinese rugs made something like a sensation, exciting a competition so brisk as to be a little surprising in view of prevailing business conditions. They are succeeded at the American Art Galleries by four or five collections, the Due D'Avaray tapestries and lacer, the Hood paintings of the eighteenth century English school, the Chinese and Japanese bronzes brought together by the late Charles H. Cramp, of Philadelphia; the Albert Tucker collection of antique furniture, and the laces and other miscellaneous objects left by the late Mrs. Emilie de L. Havemeyer. We reproduce one or two of the Hood paintings. At the Anderson galleries there are the modern French paintings collected by the late Henry A. Bateman, of Baltimore, with examples added from other sources. Baudry, Corot, Isabey and Delacroix are among the artists represented. An American is also in the catalogue, Miss Mary Cassatt.

Drawings and Paintings from Various Old Schools.

The charm of an exhibition is not by any means to be determined by the "importance" of the things it contains. Among the old drawings now on view at the Keppel gallery there are few deserving the word so beloved by makers of catalogues, but this does not lessen the value of the affair. The really important point in matters of this sort is simply that one should come in contact with the spirit of genuine artists, casually and spontaneously liberated. One does not care a straw as to the identity of the man who drew the "Figure in Flowing Drapery," judiciously catalogued as "in the manner of Giulio Romano." It is enough that it should be a characteristic souvenir of the time, a graceful sketch by some competent if in no wise distinguished Italian. He had the large manner of his period. He knew his trade. He could draw. Delightful, too, in much the same studio fashion, is the "Gabrielle d'Estrées" of Daniel Dumonstier. We have seen infinitely finer portraits from the hand of that courtly draftsman, but this is a quite good enough specimen of his stately tradition.

THE ARTIST AND HIS FAMILY.
(From the painting by Rigaud at the Ehrich Gallery.)

It is the tradition that counts, the curious weight and power going with most of the older men. They were masters of the art of omission. Their drawings are "notes," but they possess the savor of style which seems to have been the special appanage of the earlier schools. The Keppel show is about evenly divided between the historic past and our own day, the transition being made from the old Italian, Dutch and French masters through Englishmen like Gainsborough, Turner, Crome and Constable to moderns like Daubigny and Lelanne, and thence to artists of our own day, Bejot, Muirhead Bone, D. Y. Cameron, Herman A. Webster and others. There are even a couple of Abbey's inimitable illustrations, done in the old days when he was making designs for Herrick. Some of the modern men are at pains to make pictures out of their drawings. Bone is noticeable for his efforts in this direction—and very successful, agreeable efforts they are.

The loan exhibition of Grecos and Goyas at the Knoedler Gallery was traversed at length in The Tribune last Wednesday, but we cannot forbear returning for a moment to the subject. We reproduced then two of the paintings by the earlier master. To-day we include Goya amongst our illustrations. The show affords a rare opportunity for the study of his portraiture, embracing, as it does, memorials of the most diverse types. Unless his history is pretty carefully explored, one is apt to think of him as laying stress upon the sensuous motive. Probably the best known of all his portraits is the celebrated "Dona Isabel de Porcel," in the National Gallery, and that, which marks him a great painter, hardly marks him as a man of mind. But Goya, who was a mundane creature if ever there was one, had profound intellectual sympathies. With that "seeing eye" of his, to use Carlyle's phrase, there went an extraordinarily flexible sympathy, and it penetrated every sort of mask. The man who broke off in the middle of making a portrait of the Duke of Wellington to fly at that individual with murderous intent was capable of lingering over the sweet traits of a child. One of the most haunting of his paintings in this exhibition is the lovely "Victor Guye." Notable, too, for what it tells us of his feeling for the gentler figures in his circle, is the "Don Isidro Gonzalez." He was not always content with the soft beauty of women or with the men who gave his satire something to bite upon. His gallery includes artists and thinkers, whom he painted with a positively loving touch, with a suavity in odd contrast to the ferocious energy he so often employed.

In the collection of old French portraits just placed on view at the Ehrich galleries it is the decorative motive that predominates. We are far, indeed, amongst these works, from the mysticism of Greco or the poignant psychology of Goya. The emotions are tabooed, save as they are reduced to the ingenuous sentimentality of a portrait like David's "Mlle. Raucourt Dressed as a Vestal." Portraiture as it is exemplified in this work was nothing if not in the mode—and the mode was determined by the light movement of society at court and in the houses of the great. The Ehrich show draws upon both the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. In either period the fashion is the same. It makes much of dress and of a gracious demeanor. Rigaud's "Portrait of the Artist and His Family" is a picture exactly representative of the artificial, yet not in the least devitalized habit of the school. That disciplined style, so finished, so elegant, was as natural as breathing to the earlier Frenchman, and only the impulse of genius, as in men like Watteau or Chardin, carried the current idiom to a higher power.

Talent kept to the fixed path. Within its irrevocable limitations it could be very charming. Witness such portraits as the "Countess Kinski," by Vigee Le Brun, or the family pair by the same hand. Witness the "Portrait of the Artist's Daughter," by Carle Van Loo. The interesting thing about this exhibition is its illustration of the fact that a method and a manner may be shared by the members of a school, and their works nevertheless escape the blight of conventionality. If those painters could do so well with a formula it was, perhaps, because they were all compelled, if they wanted to survive, to make themselves good workmen. Vigee Le Brun was never a great artist, but she was thoroughly trained. No tyro could have painted her "Countess Siemontkouski-Bistry," a bewitching subject, drawn with admirable skill.

The Subversive Influence of Some Modern Ideas.

From time to time, since the Armory Show was held, in 1913, we have had occasion to note reverberations of the noise it made. And we have wondered, all along, when they would begin to be of a nature to be taken seriously. It seemed as if the stimulus provided by the incident ought sooner or later to result in something of interest. As a matter of fact, no good at all would appear to have been done by the laudable efforts of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors. The only types in the exhibition who excited emulation were those least worthy of consideration, the Cubists and other freakish portents. Their influence has been all over the place and has done a lot of harm, leading young painters especially to splash about with no obvious purpose save to attract attention to themselves.

In some cases the persistence of the "new idea" may be regarded philosophically enough. The new paintings by M. Francis Picabia, which may be seen at the Photo-Secession Gallery, mere riddles of fantasticality, may safely be left to the people who care to give their time to that sort of thing. But at the Carroll Gallery, where works by a number of the French "revolutionists" have lately been shown, there are now some decorations which have originated on this side of the water, and they excite real regret. They have been painted in the Co-operative Mural Shops, where the different hands engaged are supposed to bring different aptitudes to a common task, but where everybody seems to be bitten by the same craze. In these decorations queerly painted females sit around in queer landscapes. In one of them a feline animal of some sort, blue spotted, and waving a striped tail, sprawls defiantly between flying peacocks and other fearful wildfowl. A "pattern" of some kind, we suppose, is aimed at. It is a grotesque and ugly pattern. We could condone the ugliness in this exhibition if it were accompanied by good workmanship, if the makers of the decorations showed that they knew how to paint well and had some plausible ideas. What we perceive, instead, is a general effect as of amateurishness playing with ill-digested eccentricities. If we are to thank the Armory Show for such performances, then it is a pity that the Armory Show was ever invented.

VICTOR GUYE.
(From the portrait by Goya at the Knoedler Gallery.)

The Work of an Artist Who Knows What He Is About.

The example of Mr. Albert Sterner, who has an exhibition of his lithographs at the gallery of the Berlin Photograph Company, might well be pondered by the dubsters for whom the Armory Show seemed to open a new heaven and a new earth. What is the secret of the charm which exhales from his drawings? It is at bottom, no doubt, his taste, his feeling for beauty of form, his whole artistic sense of things; but in almost equal measure we are inclined to attribute it to his mastery over his medium. Nay, it is more than the medium. He has studied the living model, he has given thought to matters of composition, he has seriously interested himself in light and shade, and always, in season and out of season, he has taken care to draw like a gentleman. "Thorough" has been his watchword—and what is the result? He draws with perfect ease. His line has grace and sometimes subtlety. When he chooses to draw the nude as in the "Remorse," with a bold, broad summarizing touch, he remains sure of his truth and gets into the bargain, something of the force of style.

There are ideas in his exhibition, ideas of sentiment, of romance, of drama. He has illustrated Poe, and the experience has had its effect upon his imagination. He gives us in some of his designs a kind of macabre poetry. But we would emphasize more particularly the brilliance of his technique. It shows in his sound and interesting draftsmanship, and then in the beauty of tone which he has extorted from his rich blacks and delicate, silvery grays. With the lithographs are exhibited a number of drawings, chiefly portraits. They disclose the same sterling traits that we have noted in his work on the stone, the traits of an accomplished and sincere artist. They are mightily refreshing!

Another capable draftsman, Mr. Muirhead Bone, may be studied at the moment in an exhibition of his prints at the Hahle gallery. He draws architecture and landscape as Mr. Sterner draws the figure, with the searching and affectionate authority that comes from knowledge. His style is austere and sharply individualized. Occasionally one may fancy an echo of Claude or Rembrandt in his work, but in the main he uses a language unmistakably his own. He is as potent as Cameron in expressing the atmosphere enveloping an old building, its elusive, spiritual character. And, austere as he is, he can also be fairly lyrical when in landscape he finds precisely the right theme. This exhibition is made up of fine impressions. It is worth seeing.

THE LUTE PLAYER.
(From the painting by Jacob de Bray in the Hood Collection.)

A Luminous Study of the Art of Winslow Homer.

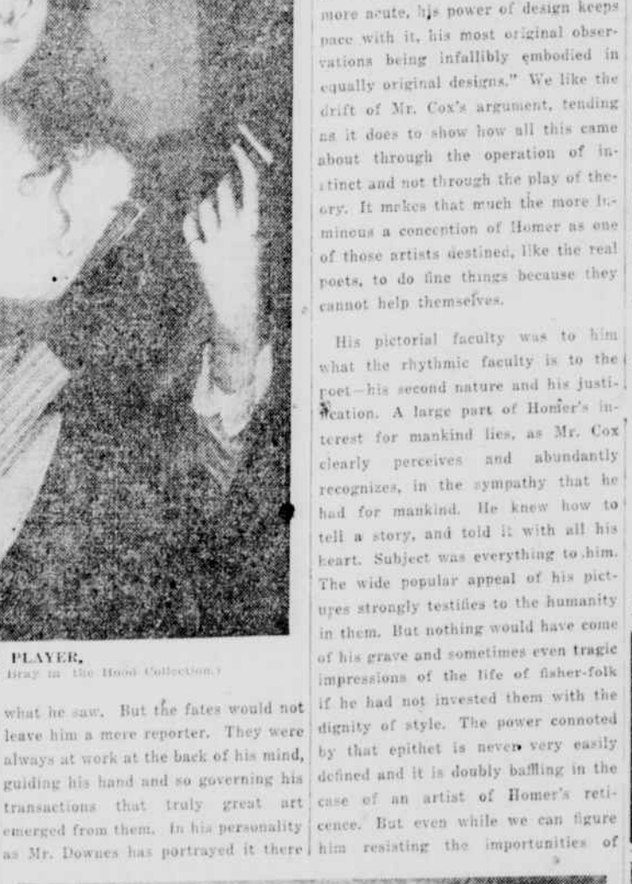
For the external facts in the life of Winslow Homer it is necessary to go to the biography by W. H. Downes, a narrative admirably framed on the basis of exhaustive and sympathetic research. For a concise interpretation of the painter's art we would cordially commend the reader to "Winslow Homer" (Frederic Fairchild Sherman), a monograph by Kenyon Cox, which is the best piece of criticism that writer has yet put to his credit. This is a good book because it is a candid one, taking the fullest account not only of Homer's great gifts, but of his very significant weaknesses. He is frankly characterized as "a poor technician, an unequal colorist, a powerful but untrained draftsman." What, was it that pulled him through, despite these disabilities? Pure genius, we should say; the power which invades a man when he is born to paint pictures and has an authentic inspiration. To Homer the latter seemed nothing more nor less than a mandate to be faithful to what he saw. But the fates would not leave him a mere reporter. They were always at work at the back of his mind, guiding his hand and so governing his transactions that truly great art emerged from them. In his personality as Mr. Downes has portrayed it there was not a trace of naiveté, but something like it is traceable in his art.

Mr. Cox speaks of the impersonal manner in which he entered into direct competition with nature, painting a subject, as he was wont to say himself, "with reference solely to its simple and absolute truth," but he will not call Homer a cool observer; he would call him, rather, "an exalted observer—a kind of flaming realist—a burning devotee of the actual." In his development of this point the author makes his most effective contribution to the analysis of the whole subject when he emphasizes the flowering of Homer's observations in extraordinary beauties of design. Here, too, he especially requires the courage of his convictions, for Homer, so far from giving him any help, would seem to contradict his view of the matter. It is noted that a mural painter once tried to express his admiration for the composition of line and space in Homer's pictures, only to find the master "blankly unresponsive and inclined to deny the existence of any such qualities either in his own work or elsewhere—professing, indeed, not to know what was meant by the language employed." Was this an expression of boredom or did it denote the naiveté to which we have alluded? In any case there is no denying the force of Mr. Cox's remark that all of Homer's great effects have their roots in the art of composition. Consciously or unconsciously, the painter "always places his subject rightly within the rectangle of his border, he always balances felicitously his filled and empty spaces, and as his power of observation becomes more acute, his power of design keeps pace with it, his most original observations being infallibly embodied in equally original designs." We like the drift of Mr. Cox's argument, tending as it does to show how all this came about through the operation of instinct and not through the play of theory. It makes that much the more luminous a conception of Homer as one of those artists destined, like the real poets, to do fine things because they cannot help themselves.

His pictorial faculty was to him what the rhythmic faculty is to the poet—his second nature and his justification. A large part of Homer's interest for mankind lies, as Mr. Cox clearly perceives and abundantly recognizes, in the sympathy that he had for mankind. He knew how to tell a story, and told it with all his heart. Subject was everything to him. The wide popular appeal of his pictures strongly testifies to the humanity in them. But nothing would have come of his grave and sometimes even tragic impressions of the life of fisher-folk if he had not invested them with the dignity of style. The power connoted by that epithet is never very easily defined and it is doubly baffling in the case of an artist of Homer's reticence. But even while we can figure him resisting the importunities of criticism with a cynical chuckle, we can surmise that he had, after all, nothing to conceal, no esoteric mysteries up his sleeve. The central characteristic of his genius is a wholesome simplicity. While we are searching that wonderful style of his for some key, grand, gloomy and peculiar, we are recalled to his passion for the truth, to his almost rude life on the Maine coast, to his essentially manly traits, and, again, to his naiveté. What more is needed to account for the splendor of his achievements, for his style, for his beauty? What more—if we throw in genius?

THE WEST WIND.
(From the painting by Winslow Homer.)

Mr. Cox in the long run leaves us dependent, of course, upon that hypothesis. But this does not mean that he shirks his task. His book explains everything that is explicable in Homer's art and thus carries us most helpfully to the final conclusion we have indicated. It ought to prove of solid service in the establishment of a better understanding of the subject. Incidentally, we may add, it makes an engaging souvenir of the painter. It is beautifully printed and the illustrations, save for the frontispiece in colors, are first rate reproductions of well chosen examples.



DIANA AND ENDYMION.
(From the painting by Coypel in the Hood Collection.)